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1 — Lake Pontchartrain basin being monitored for spillway environmental effects, New Orleans Times-Picayune, 3/8/18

http://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2018/03/army_corps_of_engineers_lake_p.html#incart_river_index
Officials with several federal agencies and the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation have begun monitoring the environmental effects of opening the Bonnet Carre Spillway to lower water levels on the Mississippi River by moving part of its flow into Lake Pontchartrain.

2 — The Oklahoma Energy Resources Board attained goals during 2017, its annual report states, The Oklahoman, 3/9/18

<http://newsok.com/the-oklahoma-energy-resources-board-attained-goals-during-2017-its-annual-report-states/article/5586264>
Mindy Stitt, executive director of the board, said the organization was happy to have cleaned up its 1,000th well site in Osage County during 2017.

3 — WIPP looks to redefine calculations for waste volume, Santa Fe New Mexican, 3/8/18

http://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/wipp-looks-to-redefine-calculations-for-waste-volume/article_06e8f005-5a88-5d10-b541-af9f56e4accf.html

Officials are seeking permit changes to allow more nuclear waste to be stored in an underground facility in southeastern New Mexico. Officials with the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad are looking to redefine how the volume of the waste is calculated.

4 — Sandbags, water dams at the ready as locals wait to see how high water affects Mississippi, Atchafalaya, Baton Rouge Advocate, 3/8/18

http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/article_172c5cd6-2318-11e8-b5b9-af5744732461.html

Some local governments began taking early precautions Thursday for expected river crests on the Mississippi and Atchafalaya later this month as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also stepped up its own flood fight with the partial opening of the Bonnet Carre Spillway near New Orleans.

5 — 100 homes flooded after levee around central Arkansas town breaks, official says, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 3/8/18

<http://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2018/mar/08/100-homes-flooded-after-levee-around-arkansas-town/?f=latest>

Many residences in a small central Arkansas town are flooded after the levee around the town recent rainfall caused the levee to break, county officials said Thursday.

6 — The environmental and human health effects of uranium mining, Investor Intel, 3/8/18

<https://investorintel.com/sectors/technology/technology-intel/environmental-human-health-effects-uranium-mining/>

This article focuses on global production of U by the mining industry since World War II, the environmental and human health effects of this activity worldwide, how procedures for containing waste from U mining have changed in the past 70 years although they remain of concern in many non-OECD nations, and the need for green engineering

and green chemistry processes for separation and recovery of U, individual radionuclides, and individual associated toxic metals from waste and other streams.

7 — Texas Beach Watch reports high levels of fecal bacteria at three Corpus Christi beaches, Corpus Christi Caller-Times, 3/9/18

<https://www.caller.com/story/news/local/2018/03/08/texas-beach-watch-reports-high-levels-fecal-bacteria-three-corpus-christi-beaches/408200002/>

Spring break is just around the corner, which means there will be a lot of people heading to the beach for some fun in the sun next week. But before beachgoers jump in the water, they should be aware of some not-so-friendly creatures floating around the water along the coastline. And we don't mean jellyfish.

8 — EPA Awards School Districts DERA, KOAM, 3/8/18

<http://www.koamtv.com/story/37682844/epa-awards-school-districts-dera>

Schools districts in Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Missouri are included in an \$8.7 million award to replace or retrofit older diesel school buses. Each of 141 school bus fleets in 32 states will receive rebates through the EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) funding.

9 — San Antonio's CPS Energy faces criticism on clean energy strategy, San Antonio Express-News, 3/8/18

<https://www.mysanantonio.com/business/eagle-ford-energy/article/San-Antonio-s-CPS-Energy-faces-criticism-on-12739579.php>

San Antonio's public utility, CPS Energy, faced blowback from city leaders and environmental groups Thursday on its newly released strategic power plan that takes decades to fully transition to renewable sources of energy.

10 — Rick Perry seeks new path to save coal, San Antonio Express-News, 3/8/18

<https://www.expressnews.com/business/eagle-ford-energy/article/Rick-Perry-seeks-new-path-to-save-coal-12737124.php>

Energy Secretary Rick Perry is pushing the development of a new generation of coal power plants while seeking to slash spending on technology that many government officials and analysts view as critical to coal's survival in a low-carbon world.

11 — Meet Claire. She can see a little methane leak from space, E&E News, 3/9/18

<https://www.eenews.net/climatewire/stories/1060075901>

The world's first space-based system to help identify specific sources of greenhouse gas emissions is now circling the Earth. The main unit in the network is a package of state-of-the-art sensors launched by the European Space Agency in October. By December, it had begun to map plumes of methane, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and various aerosols over industrial facilities and cities as it passed over Europe, Asia, Africa and South America.

12 — Non-profit hopes to open outdoor classroom in swamps by Spanish Lake, Baton Rouge Advocate, 3/9/18

http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/article_172c5cd6-2318-11e8-b5b9-af5744732461.html

A nonprofit intends to turn the wetlands around Spanish Lake into an educational destination. Students and scientists have thousands of marshy acres to explore, and because the site has been used as an oil field, there are already roads leading into the swamp.

13 — Dallas to Houston high-speed rail plan reaches end of public input Friday, Dallas Morning News, 3/9/18

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/transportation/2018/03/08/dallas-houston-high-speed-rail-plan-reaches-end-public-input-friday>

As the public input period comes to a close for a proposed high-speed rail line from Dallas to Houston, North Texas transportation planners are unveiling potential stops for a connector route.

Lake Pontchartrain basin being monitored for spillway environmental effects

Updated Mar 8, 6:27 PM;
Posted Mar 8, 6:28 PM

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By **Mark Schleifstein**, mschleifstein@nola.com,
NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

Officials with several federal agencies and the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation have begun monitoring the environmental effects of opening the Bonnet Carre Spillway to lower water levels on the Mississippi River by moving part of its flow into Lake Pontchartrain. The spillway was opened Thursday (March 8) by the Army Corps of Engineers and is expected to remain open for about three weeks.



Those effects could include algae blooms caused by the combination of fertilizer and other nutrients carried by the river interacting with sunlight over the next few weeks. In

the past, such blooms have included blue-green algae, which is toxic to humans and pets.

Large algae blooms also can cause low-oxygen dead zones at some locations on the lake bottom. When the algae dies, it sinks to the bottom and decomposes, which uses up oxygen.

The lake foundation also will be monitoring how the addition of the river's freshwater reduces the salinity in the lake and as far east as Mississippi Sound over the next few weeks, and the effect of that change on fisheries and oysters, said John Lopez, director of the foundation's coastal sustainability program.

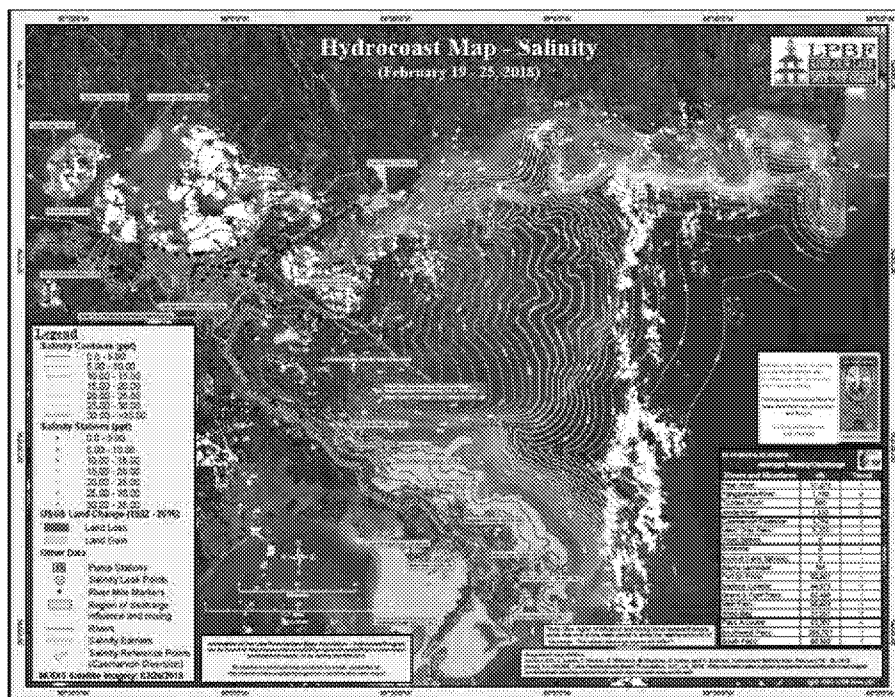
Lopez said the combination of a comparatively brief opening period and the fact that it's occurring early in the year should limit the effect of the freshwater flow from the river on the lake's environment.

"During the last few openings, we haven't seen any major blooms in the lake," Lopez said of the algae threat. "But I think there has been evidence of blooms during recent openings in Mississippi Sound and Biloxi Marsh."



If the opening only lasts two to three weeks, by July, the lake's salinity should be back to normal and the effects on fish should be limited, Lopez said. ¹

The lake foundation has an ongoing monitoring program for the lake, which will continue during the opening. It posts water quality data to its website weekly and also publishes Hydrocoast Maps every two weeks which will illustrate the effects of the spillway opening as it progresses. The maps show how salinity levels differ throughout the basin, which includes all water bodies east of the river; changes in habitat; rainfall; various water quality measure; and a variety of biological information, including oyster fleet survey results.



The Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation publishes maps outlining the salinity of the basin's water bodies every two weeks. The maps will show the effects of opening the Bonnet Carre Spillway to allow



Mississippi River water to enter the lake during the weeks ahead.

The Army Corps of Engineers, which oversees the spillway, has arranged for a team from the U.S. Geological Survey to collect water quality samples at four locations in the basin.

The sampling will be conducted in the spillway at the Airline Highway bridge, at Crossover #2 of the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway near the North Shore, at the causeway's Crossover #7 near the south shore, and in eastern Lake Pontchartrain north of Point aux Herbes, near U.S. 11.

The USGS officials will be monitoring for nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus; major ions like carbon, potassium, magnesium and sodium; Triazine herbicides; suspended solids and chlorophyll. The researchers also will be collecting phytoplankton samples, if algae blooms occur.

A team from the corps' Engineer Research and Development Center in Vicksburg will be stationed in the spillway to find and capture endangered pallid sturgeon that may float in through the spillway. The fish will eventually be relocated to the river.



"Shortly after closure of the structure, field crews will begin sampling for Pallid sturgeon using an electroshocking boat, gill nets, and seines," says a corps monitoring plan summary prepared for this year's opening. "These three gears were the most effective in capturing sturgeon previously. All sturgeon will be floy tagged (external tag with a unique number), weighed, and measured. Blood samples will be taken from Pallid aturgeon to determine gender and reproductive status. Pallid sturgeon will be released back into the Mississippi River."

The team also will capture shovelnose sturgeon, which are listed as threatened because they look so much like the Pallid sturgeon. Some of the shovelnose sturgeon will be returned to the river. But 25 of the fish will be tagged with sonic transmitters that will allow researchers to follow their movements through the spillway and into the lake. The information gained will be used for a biological assessment of the spillway's impacts.

Researchers also will attempt to capture and tag 25 Asian carp, an invasive species that has established itself in the Mississippi and is posing a threat to the Great Lakes.



The researchers will deploy remote receivers in the floodway and at the entrance to Lake Pontchartrain to monitor the movements of both fish species.

Part of this project will be aimed at determining the tolerance of the shovelnose species to saltwater as a means of determining how pallid sturgeon disperse during spillway openings. The Asian carp will be studied to determine age, gender and reproductive condition, part of establishing a baseline for future risk analysis for their establishment in coastal rivers, the corps plan said.

Participating in the corps biological monitoring plan are the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. The Louisiana wildlife agency has a long history of sampling in Lake Pontchartrain, Lake Borgne and the Mississippi Sound.

The USGS and the corps also are collecting discharge measurements in the river before, during and after the opening, both upstream and downstream of the spillway, and daily discharge measurements in the spillway at the Airline Highway bridge.



The Oklahoma Energy Resources Board attained goals during 2017, its annual report states



by Jack Money • Published: March 9, 2018 5:00 AM CDT • Updated: March 9, 2018 5:00 AM CDT



A trackhoe led efforts by the Oklahoma Energy Resources Board in 2017 to begin restoring its 1,000th abandoned well site in Osage County. The site was restored to grassland by the time the project was completed. [Photos provided]

1,000th well site in Osage County during 2017.

Stitt said the board initially encountered resistance as it tried to work with tribal and federal authorities to address problems with abandoned wells in the county during the mid-1990s.

She said that environment, however, has improved greatly in recent years.

And addressing 1,000 abandoned wells within the county is significant, given that the organization's total number of sites addressed across the entire state just reached the 16,000 mark in 2017.

The board restored 760 well sites in 2017, officials said.

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"Initially, they (Osage County federal and tribal authorities) were pretty skeptical," Stitt said. "But now we are getting a lot done, and we are very excited because there's so much more that still needs to be addressed there."

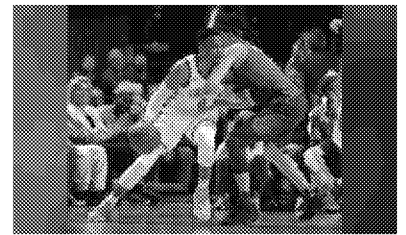
The Oklahoma Energy Resources Board remains focused on its mission of improving the lives of all Oklahomans through education and restoration.

And a report it published recently that covers its 2017 activities shows it continues to make strides in both areas.

Mindy Stitt, executive director of the board, said the organization was happy to have cleaned up its



from THE NEWSOK HOMEPAGE



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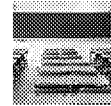
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View the Oklahoma Energy Resources Board's 2017 annual report at oerb.com/annualreport17

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Educating grows

The board also continues to refine its educational efforts that target both school-aged youngsters and the general public at large.

Stitt said the board recently made alliances with four regional educational groups that support efforts to educate students in science, technology, engineering and math.

Accordingly, it's been working with the Oklahoma Education and Industry Partnership, the Tulsa Regional STEM Alliance, the Central Oklahoma STEM Alliance and the Sam Noble Explorology Program to develop curriculum that helps students studying in those fields.

The curriculum isn't just thrown together, either.

Board officials said the materials are put together by a committee of teachers who brainstorm to develop them and make sure they meet the state's current academic standards.

Then, they are field tested and evaluated by about 25 teachers and revised to address any concerns.

In 2017, a total of about 1,500 teachers attended 140 workshops held across the state to distribute those educational materials in kits valued up to \$1,100. Board officials said the cumulative value of distributed educational materials in 2017 was \$885,000.

"What we are putting out there helps the alliances provide STEM related activities to their students," Stitt said. "In turn, that interests students in the oil and gas fields, because it gives them ways to learn about science and math that aren't so scary.

"And that helps provide future potential employees for our companies."

Plus, while not covered in the 2017 data, the organization also is busy distributing \$2 million dollars to science, technology, engineering and math teachers in districts across the state.

The board is allocating the cash based upon each district's enrollment and its percentage of low-income students, allowing districts to use it to obtain materials and equipment they need to further STEM offerings for their students.

"The checks are going out now," Stitt said.

From a public education perspective, the Oklahoma Energy Resources Board said it amplified the message it is putting out through its EnergyHQ website, EnergyHQ.com.

Board officials said they added 77 pieces of newly produced content to the site in 2017.

"Our goal is to share positive information with the public that it might not know," Stitt said. "We want people to know what the industry contributes to the state, and we are getting positive reactions from its viewers."

Showstopping results

Stitt said the board also moved the Oklahoma Oil & Gas Expo to the Bennett Event Center at the Oklahoma State Fair Park in 2017.

With 277 exhibitors and more than 3,650 attendees, it was the largest Expo to date.

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“We received a lot of positive feedback about the new building and look forward to repeating this success next year.”

She said one of the event's goals is to expose Oklahoma's smaller producers to technology they might otherwise have not been able to afford.

"Larger producers have research and development funds, but smaller ones don't, so we want to help them in any way we can," she said. "Bringing in more companies that are willing to support small producers helps those well owners to both save money and improve production from their wells."

The Oklahoma Energy Resources Board is funded through a one-tenth of 1 percent assessment on the sale of oil and natural gas in Oklahoma that's voluntarily paid for by oil and natural gas producers and royalty owners. Data on the organization's website says only 5 percent of the funds raised through the assessment are refunded to producers and royalty owners who make that request.



Jack Money



Before leaving The Oklahoman in 2009, Jack Money worked on the paper's city, state and metro news desks for nearly two decades, including a stint... read more >

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WIPP looks to redefine calculations for waste volume

The Associated Press Mar 8, 2018 Updated 8 hrs ago

CARLSBAD — Officials are seeking permit changes to allow more nuclear waste to be stored in an underground facility in southeastern New Mexico.

Officials with the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad are looking to redefine how the volume of the waste is calculated, the *Carlsbad Current-Argus* reported Wednesday.

The Nuclear Waste Partnership in January submitted a modification request for the facility's permit with the New Mexico Environment Department, seeking to alter the volume calculations that include space between the inner waste containers.

The drums of waste are packed into larger containers, called overpacks, to make handling easier and to protect against ruptures. The current calculations include the outer container's overall volume.

The U.S. Energy Department is asking for the calculations to be based on the volume of the inner containers, claiming that measurement is more accurate.

Under the current measurement system, the underground storage facility is about halfway to capacity.

Should the change be approved, the facility would be about a third full under the alternative volume measurements, officials said.

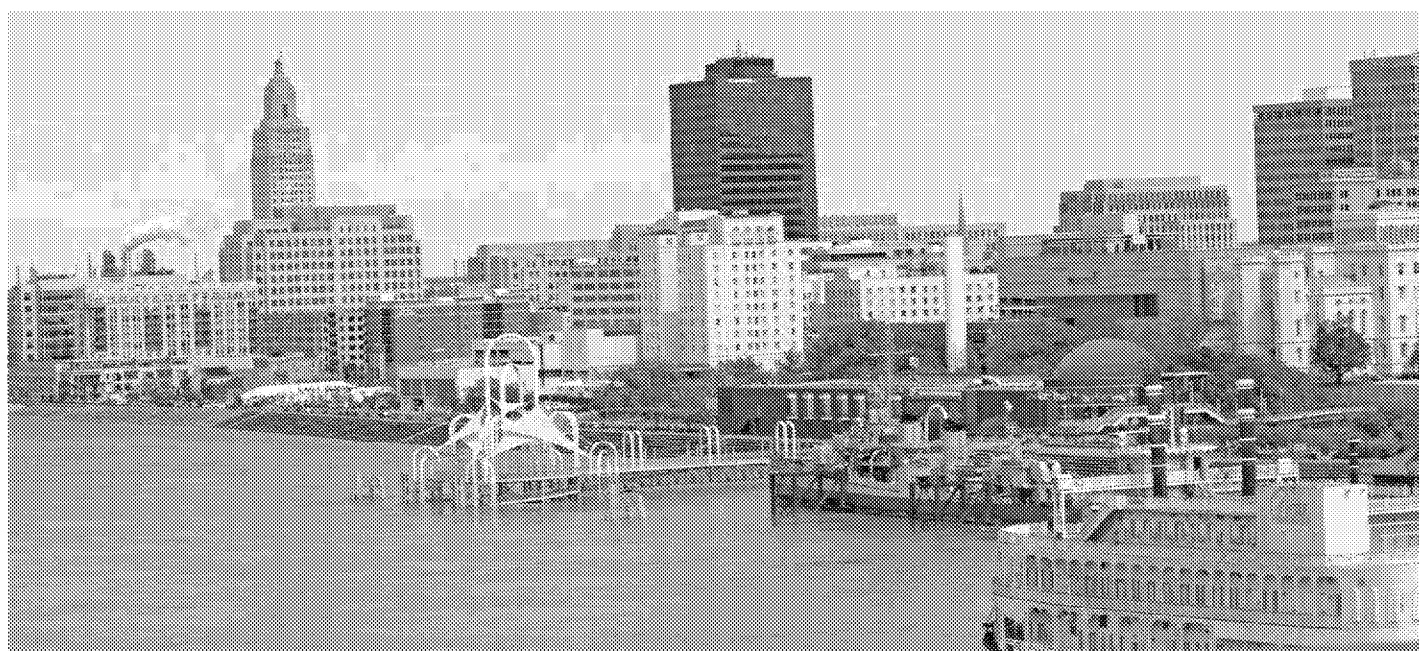
The federal Land Withdrawal Act sets the maximum capacity for waste storage at 6.2 million cubic feet.

The facility would continue to report the volume under the current calculation to state if the change is approved, said Rich Chavez, a manager of Regulatory and Environmental Services for the partnership.

“We can sort that information and report it in numerous ways, but it’s one book,” Chavez said. “For the permit, for the LWDA, we hope to move forward with counting the inner container.”

Sandbags, water dams at the ready as locals wait to see how high water affects Mississippi, Atchafalaya

BY DAVID J. MITCHELL | DMITCHELL@THEADVOCATE.COM MAR 8, 2018 - 6:22 PM



As seen from the I-10 Mississippi River bridge, the water levels of the Mississippi River are up on the downtown riverfront Tuesday, March 6, 2018, in Baton Rouge, La. The new State Capital Building rises to a point in the background, with the USS Kidd floating in its cradle on the river near the Baton Rouge Dock in the foreground.

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ADVOCATE STAFF FILE PHOTO BY BILL FEIG

David Mitchell

Some local governments began taking early precautions Thursday for expected river crests on the Mississippi and Atchafalaya later this month as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also stepped up its own flood fight with the partial opening of the Bonnet Carre Spillway near New Orleans.

The two major rivers in south Louisiana are part of interconnected systems created by nature and plumbed by humans, so high water is affecting both.

East Baton Rouge city-parish government plans to install dirt-filled HESCO baskets Saturday on a Mississippi levee section near the intersection of Main and North streets, a known low spot.

Story Continued Below



City-parish spokeswoman Rachel Haney said the baskets will add an extra three feet to the top of the 36-foot section of levee near Baton Rouge's downtown.

The city-parish also has 10,000 pre-filled sandbags as well as 10,600 feet of inflatable water dams available as additional precautionary measures.

In Assumption Parish, which is subject to backwater flooding from high water in the Atchafalaya River, Sheriff Leland Falcon announced a joint sheriff-parish government plan to bring in equipment and manpower from Elayn Hunt Correctional Center in St. Gabriel for sandbagging.

Other local governments, such as in Ascension Parish, are taking a wait-and-see approach.

"Personnel and equipment are on standby if necessary," said Martin McConnell, parish government spokesman.

None of the parishes are expected to see key river crests for another two weeks or more.

Though levels will be well above flood stage by then, neither river will see levels that match 2011, when the Corps opened the Morganza Flood Control Structure northwest of Baton Rouge. The Corps has said the Mississippi won't reach required flows to trigger opening Morganza.

"We are not forecast to open Morganza under current conditions," said Heath Jones, chief of emergency management for the Corps' New Orleans District.

Rickey Boyett, Corps spokesman, added that though seepage areas have been spotted along the levees, they are appearing where they commonly happen and aren't showing signs of sediment that would indicate a weakening of the levee.



The Morganza Spillway structure in Pointe Coupee Parish and its overland floodway are an emergency relief system to protect the levees in the Baton Rouge-New Orleans corridor by funneling Mississippi River water to the Atchafalaya Basin. The Bonnet Carre, which is farther downstream on the Mississippi, protects New Orleans' levees by sending water overland to Lake Pontchartrain upriver of the city.

Unlike the 2011 event, high water on the Red River is a big factor in the rising levels on the Mississippi this time, Jones said. The Corps tries to funnel the combined flow of the Mississippi and Red rivers through the Old River Control Structure, which is farther upriver from the Morganza and which diverts 30 percent of the combined Mississippi/Red rivers to the Atchafalaya River.

In this case, half of the Atchafalaya's flow below Old River is from the Red River, meaning less of the Mississippi's upriver flow can be diverted to the Atchafalaya, Jones said.

The Mississippi is forecast to crest at 42.5 feet in Baton Rouge on March 21, the fourth highest on record, the National Weather Service says. The Atchafalaya River is forecast to crest in Morgan City at 7.5 feet on March 23.

John Boudreaux, Assumption's homeland security director, said the Atchafalaya crest at Morgan City means his parish will see a slow rise in backwater so the parish has advised its residents to start preparations. The Atchafalaya reached a similar level last year, he said, leading to backwater that covered roads but did not get into homes.

Sheriff Falcon said the new sandbagging equipment fills 10,000 sand bags per day per machine. The parish had two Thursday with the people to work both. The equipment will be in Assumption two days this week and possible more days next week, Falcon said.

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100 homes flooded after levee around central Arkansas town breaks, official says

By Rachel Herzog

This article was published March 8, 2018 at 4:13 p.m.

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Many residences in a small central Arkansas town are flooded after the levee around the town recent rainfall caused the levee to break, county officials said Thursday.

About 100 homes in Humnoke have between 16 inches and 2 feet of water inside, according to Doug Erwin, the county judge of Lonoke County. The town has a population of less than 300.

The levee surrounded the town, which has a lower altitude than the communities around it, Erwin said. It broke Monday night when water from Cabot and Jacksonville rushed in. He said officials hope to repair it in preparation for more rainfall that is forecast this weekend.

The Arkansas Department of Emergency Management and the Red Cross are evacuating people and offering assistance, Erwin said.

"We're doing all we can do right now," he said.

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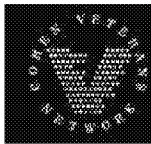
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Texas Beach Watch reports high levels of fecal bacteria at three Corpus Christi beaches

Meagan Falcon, Corpus Christi

Published 5:36 p.m. CT March 8, 2018 | Updated 12:03 a.m. CT March 9, 2018



(Photo: Caller-Times files)

Spring break is just around the corner, which means there will be a lot of people heading to the beach for some fun in the sun next week.

More: [When does Spring Break 2018 start in Texas? \(/story/news/local/2018/02/27/http-caller-when-spring-break-2018-texas/376427002/\)](http://story/news/local/2018/02/27/http-caller-when-spring-break-2018-texas/376427002/)

But before beachgoers jump in the water, they should be aware of some not-so-friendly creatures floating around the water along the coastline.

And we don't mean jellyfish.

Texas Beach Watch (<https://cgis.glo.texas.gov/Beachwatch/#>), a division of the Texas General Land Office, reports that tests of water samples collected at Bob Hall Pier and Ropes and Poenisch parks along Ocean Drive showed high levels of enterococcus bacteria, otherwise known as fecal bacteria. Other areas in Texas with high levels of bacteria are Galveston, Brazoria and Matagorda counties.

More: [You don't have to stay in! These are some fun things to do on a rainy Spring Break day \(/story/entertainment/2018/03/08/things-do-if-rains-corpus-christi-spring-break-2018/397430002/\)](http://story/entertainment/2018/03/08/things-do-if-rains-corpus-christi-spring-break-2018/397430002/)

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Signs by the Texas Beach Watch.com mark areas where bacteria levels are high and may cause illness cause bacteria levels. City and county officials said the tests showing high bacteria levels at three area beaches are outdated, so signs will not be posted. (Photo: Caller-Times File)

The data displayed on its website came from tests conducted between Tuesday, March 6 and Wednesday, March 7.

Although the high risk advisory recommends avoiding contact with the water as well as posting signs, the city of Corpus Christi and the coastal parks of Nueces County will not be issuing warning signs for the affected areas.

"The data on the map is outdated," said Scott Cross, director of coastal parks. "After Texas Beach Watch receives results they put an advisory 24 hours later, but within 25 hours the high risk is no longer there."

More: [When does Spring Break 2018 start in Texas? \(/story/news/local/2018/02/27/http-caller-when-spring-break-2018-texas/376427002/\)](http://story/news/local/2018/02/27/http-caller-when-spring-break-2018-texas/376427002/)



Texas Beach Watch said tests of water collected near Ropes Park showed high levels of fecal bacteria this week. (Photo: Michael Zamora)

Cross said that there are currently no high levels of bacteria in the water along Bob Hall Pier and that the county will not be placing warning signs along the beach.

Sharon Lewis, an environmental programs specialist with the city of Corpus Christi, said that the city will also not be placing signs.

"As of right now bacteria colonies are not over 125 in the water," she said. "If they were, we would place signs immediately."

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Texas Beach Watch said tests of water collected near Poenisch Park showed high levels of fecal bacteria this week. (Photo: Natalia Contreras/Caller-Times)

According to Texas Beach Watch's website, a water quality advisory is recommended when the enterococcus levels exceed the EPA's minimal standard of 104 colony forming units per 100 milliliter sample. Such advisories might warn beachgoers to avoid contact with the water. This includes swimming, wading, fishing, surfing, and kayaking.

Lewis said that the reason Texas Beach Watch saw a spike of high bacteria for the affected beaches earlier this week was because of the rain the Coastal Bend received.

More: [Spring Break 2018: Your guide to things to do in Corpus Christi \(/story/entertainment/2018/03/05/spring-break-2018-texas-corpus-christi/381540002/\)](#)

"When the rain washes the pavement and everything that accumulates on the sidewalk and streets, they reach the bays," she said. "That is where we see the elevated levels of bacteria, but it usually dissipates in a couple of days."

The Texas Beach Watch advises community members looking to see if their favorite beach may be under high risk advisory to check its interactive online map, where water quality information is updated each time samples are taken.

Coastal Bend areas with elevated bacteria

Here are some other places in the area that are under medium to high risk in the coastal bend, according to Texas Beach Watch:

High risk

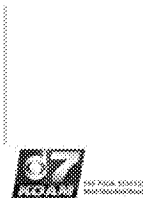
- Ropes Park # 3
- Poenisch Park
- Bob Hall Pier/Seawall # 6

Medium risk

- Nueces Bay Causeway # 3
- North Beach coastal area
- Corpus Christi Marina South
- McGee Beach # 2
- McGee Beach #1
- Emerald Beach
- Cole Park # 3
- Ropes Park # 2
- University Beach
- J.P. Luby Park # 1
- Bob Hall Pier/Seawall # 4
- Bob Hall Pier/Seawall # 5
- Bob Hall Pier/Seawall # 7
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EPA Awards School Districts, DERA

Updated: Mar 08, 2018 4:34 PM CST

By Stacie Strader

CONNECT

Schools districts in Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Missouri are included in an \$8.7 million award to replace or retrofit older diesel school buses.

"These rebates are an innovative way to improve air quality across the country and provide kids with safe, reliable transportation to and from school," said EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. "Through the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act, EPA is equipping local school districts with cleaner-running school buses, helping them along the route to healthier kids and communities."

Each of 141 school bus fleets in 32 states will receive rebates through the EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) funding. EPA Officials say the new buses will reduce pollutants that are linked to health problems such as asthma and lung damage. Districts replacing buses with engine model years of 2006 and older will receive rebates between \$15,000 and \$20,000, depending on the size of the bus. Applicants also had the option of retrofitting school buses with engine model years between 1994 to 2006 with a Diesel Oxidation Catalyst, Closed Crankcase Ventilation system, and Fuel Operated Heater to reduce toxic emissions.

"Since the EPA launched its Clean School Bus USA program 15 years ago, the agency has been working to ensure that the safest way 26 million students get to school, the iconic yellow school bus, is also one of the healthiest," said Charlie Hood, executive director of the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services. "The DERA School Bus Replacement program has been instrumental in helping school districts and contractors replace older diesel school buses with newer buses that drastically reduce airborne emissions. The program is one of the most administratively simple within the federal government and has been extremely cost-effective at achieving its intended goals. America's students and taxpayers are the beneficiaries."

"The National School Transportation Association (NSTA), and private school bus contractors around the country, congratulates EPA and those receiving rebate awards for the purchase of new clean vehicles and equipment," said NSTA President Blake Krapf. "On behalf of private school bus companies serving school districts around the country, we have strongly supported the DERA program. It is another way we can provide the safest and cleanest form of transportation for our precious cargo of school children and for the communities in which they live."

EPA has implemented standards to make newer diesel engines more than 90 percent cleaner, but many older diesel school buses are still operating. These older diesel engines emit large amounts of pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and particulate matter, which are linked to instances of aggravated asthma, lung damage and other serious health problems.

Since 2008, the DERA program has funded more than 700 clean diesel projects across the country, reducing emissions in more than 70,000 engines.

The 2017 DERA school bus rebate recipients in Missouri and Kansas are:

San Antonio's CPS Energy faces criticism on clean energy strategy

By Rye Druzin Updated 6:18 pm, Thursday, March 8, 2018



IMAGE 1 OF 35

San Antonio District 1 Councilman Robert Treviño sits in front of a protester at a presentation by city owned utility CPS Energy to city council on Thursday. Questions have been raised about how fast CPS will ... more

San Antonio's public utility, CPS Energy, faced blowback from city leaders and environmental groups Thursday on its newly released strategic power plan that takes decades to fully transition to renewable sources of energy.

"A lot of folks felt blindsided by this," said Russell Seal, a conservation committee co-chair for the Sierra Club's Alamo Group, outside of City Council chambers before the Thursday meeting with CPS. Seal and a handful of other people showed up to protest the proposal.

The meeting — a regularly scheduled presentation by CPS — came just days after the utility revealed some of its future power-generation planning that assumes the city will continue to rely on coal and natural gas through at least 2040.

Under the “flexible path” plan released Tuesday, solar, wind and other renewable energy would account for half of San Antonio’s power sources by 2040. Gas and coal-fired plants would make up 20 percent of the utility’s power generation by then, with 16 percent coming from a new “flex gen” idea that counts on future technology and power storage.

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The utility, which is owned by the city, currently gets roughly 22 percent of its energy from renewable sources, 45 percent from nuclear.

energy mix anywhere close to what we have if CPS is at all serious about reducing greenhouse gas on public health,” Terry Halpern said in a written statement. “It is

irresponsible and a slap in the face to San Antonio area residents with asthma and other respiratory diseases to continue running Spruce 1 for another 12 years, especially without modern pollution controls.”

The utility’s CEO, Paula Gold-Williams, sought to cool tension at the meeting, assuring City Council members that the plan could change.

“It’s not a baked plan that has no flexibility; the operative word is flexible,” Gold-Williams told the council. “Every year we create a look and view of the future based on what we know, and we do multiple updates and thinking and scenarios. That’s the nature of planning.”

The plan would shut down CPS’ Spruce 1 coal plant, which went online in 1992, in 2030. The Spruce 2 coal plant, which was completed in 2010 for roughly \$1 billion, would run until at least 2042, according to data provided by CPS.

CPS is planning to close the two 1970s-era J.T. Deely coal units at the end of 2018.

District 9 Councilman John Courage asked Gold-Williams why CPS couldn't just move to 100 percent renewable energy, pointing to the community of Georgetown north of Austin as an example of a city that has made such a commitment.

"That's a declaration of commitment, and it's backed up by power agreements in the background that can allocate renewable power fully to cover all the demand and load, which is a viable way to do it," Gold-Williams said. "But in reality, power is moving indiscriminately all across the grid all the time, electrons love everybody, and in reality all the power goes in there and they could be getting ... like during storms and freezing and there's no sun and no wind, they're getting power from other units."

Power purchase agreements, or PPAs, allow utilities to lock in the generation created by renewable facilities at fixed costs for long periods of times, generally for up to 25 years. CPS Energy uses power purchase agreements signed with multiple companies for most of its wind and solar generation, while it owns its fossil-fuel generation and a stake in a nuclear plant.

Kaiba White, an Austin-based energy policy specialist for Public Citizen, said that power purchase agreements are little different from a utility owning its power generation.

"It kind of hurt me to hear that there's this idea being perpetuated that Georgetown isn't doing something real because they don't own their solar farm," White said.

Rye Druzin is a San Antonio Express-News energy reporter. Read more of his stories here. | rdruzin@express-news.net | @druz_journo

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Rick Perry seeks new path to save coal

By James Osborne, Staff Writer | March 8, 2018

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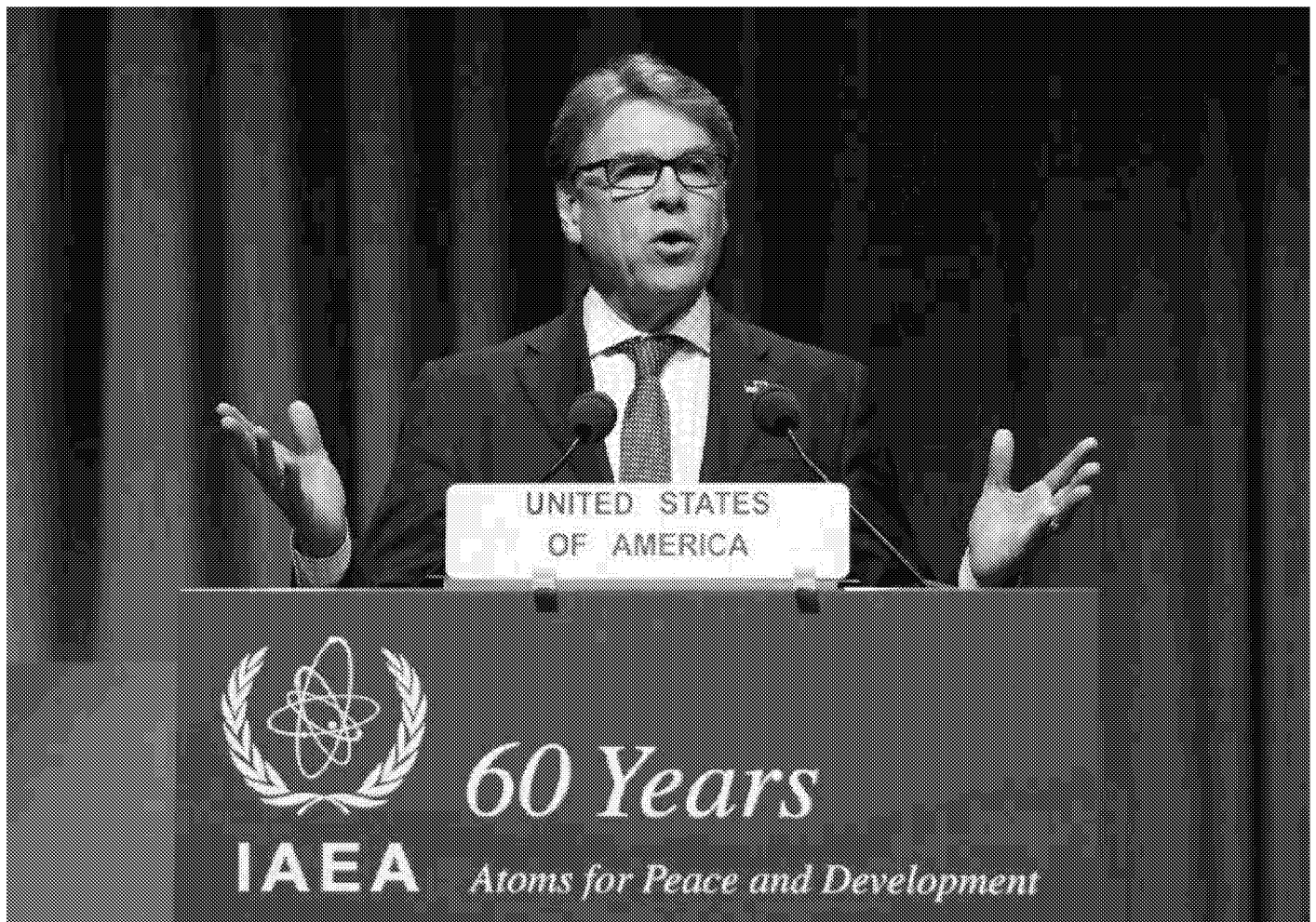
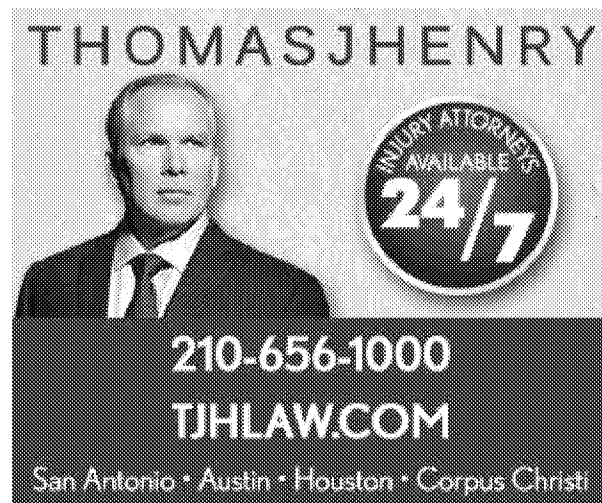


Photo: Ronald Zak/Associated Press

In this Sept. 18, 2017, file photo, U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry delivers a speech during the general conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, in Vienna, Austria. Energy Secretary Rick Perry is pushing the development of a new generation of coal power plants while seeking to slash spending on technology that many government officials and analysts view as critical to coal's survival in a low-carbon world.

WASHINGTON — Energy Secretary Rick Perry is pushing the development of a new generation of coal power plants while seeking to slash spending on technology that many government officials and analysts view as critical to coal's survival in a low-carbon world.



The effort represents another move by the Trump administration to fulfill its promises to revive the coal industry, under pressure from environmental regulations and cheaper, cleaner natural gas. Under the Department of Energy's proposed budget for 2019, government laboratories within the next four years would complete at least two designs for smaller, modular coal plants that produce more electricity from less coal.

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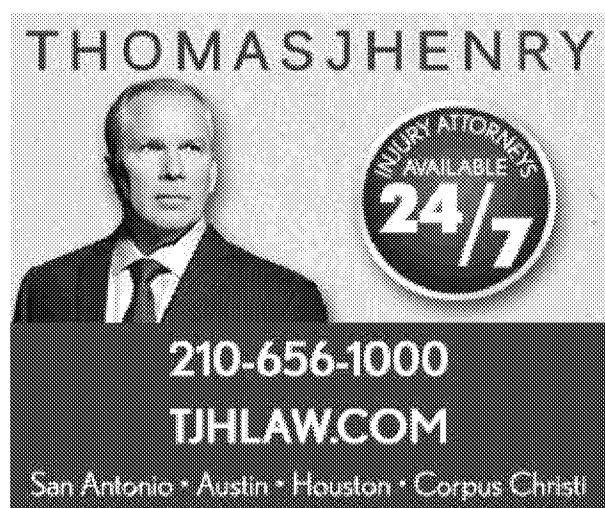
The so-called High Efficiency Low Emissions plants would produce less carbon dioxide than traditional coal plants, but nowhere near the gains scientists say are necessary to slow climate change and meet targets under international accords. To help cover costs of designing the new plants, the Trump administration is proposing an 80 percent cut from the \$196.3 million budgeted by Congress last year for research and development for carbon capture, which entails separating out carbon emissions for industrial uses or storage underground.

The Obama administration also supported high-efficiency coal plants but included carbon capture systems in its design, said Tarak Shah, a senior adviser in the Energy Department under former President Barack Obama.

“No one wants to build a coal plant without (carbon capture),” Shah said. “They can’t get financing.”

The Energy Department declined to make officials available for an interview.

The proposal for developing new coal plants is not expected to get much support in Congress, which determines how taxpayer dollars are distributed. But it gives insight into how the Trump administration and Perry are bucking a global effort to transform the energy sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



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The Energy Department’s efforts to design smaller, cleaner coal-fired plants also highlight the difficulties policymakers have faced as they try to prop up coal. Carbon capture, so far, has proved wildly expensive, while the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission recently rejected a proposal by Perry to subsidize coal and nuclear power plants with higher rates.

A full-sized power plant hasn’t been built in the United States in at least five years. Between the flood of cheap natural gas and breakthroughs in solar and wind energy, as well as a growing

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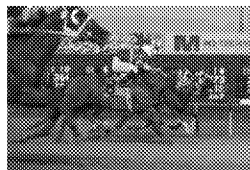
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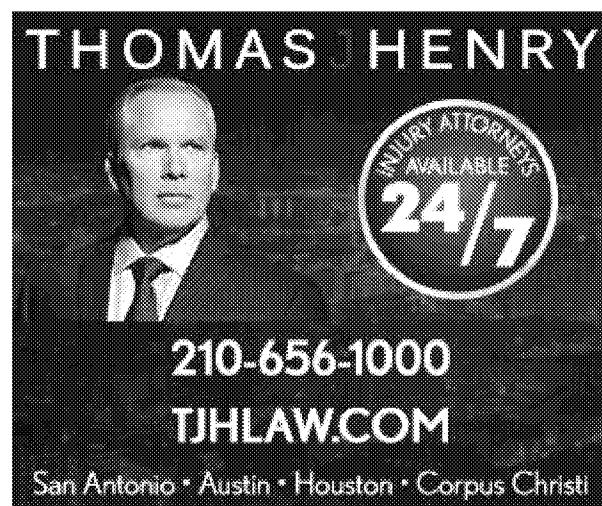
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global consensus on climate change, the economics simply looked too uncertain for coal plants that are expected to operate for decades and cost billions of dollars to build.

But President Donald Trump, who has called climate change a “hoax,” has plowed ahead with efforts to help coal, pulling back Obama-era regulations reducing carbon emissions from the power sector. Still, there is widespread expectation among power industry officials and analysts that the policy will not last into the next administration, as governments worldwide come together on climate change.

Matt Preston, an analyst at the research firm Wood Mackenzie, said it's still possible that power companies might be persuaded to build high-efficiency coal plants, but that might be a hard sell.

“Even with significant government involvement, it’s still no less expensive than building wind or solar or gas,” Preston said. “But it also comes with a whole bunch of headaches from investors saying they don’t like you burning coal.”



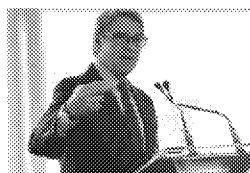
To move ahead with the development of high-efficient coal plants, Perry and the Trump administration will need to convince a Congress that has increasingly backed carbon capture research and development to go ahead with their plan. And then they will need to convince power companies and utilities to invest in a coal technology many believe will be outdated within the decade.

Paul Bailey, president of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, which represents coal-mining and power companies, said interest in the high-efficiency, low-emission coal plants is growing as older, traditional plants are shut down and regulators become concerned about keeping electricity flowing. But when — and whether — the new plants would be ready to fill the gaps remains unclear.

“We think it’s going to take (FERC) four to five years to sort all that out,” Bailey said, “so were trying to pause as many of these retirements as we can while they figure out how many coal plants they need.”

The administration’s move to shift the Department of Energy away from carbon capture mirrors a frustration within the coal industry itself. The Obama administration spent billions trying to develop carbon capture technology, focused on what was supposed to be a \$3.5 billion carbon-free coal plant in Kemper County, Mississippi. But the project, which was managed by Southern Co., went \$4 billion over budget before being abandoned last year.

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“The coal companies tried to push (carbon capture) and technologies they thought would give them some longevity,” said Joe Aldina, director of coal analytics at S&P Global Platts. “They know they need carbon capture in the long term. But they saw what happened at the Kemper plant and the delays and overruns there. There’s a general skepticism.”



But among policymakers, both inside the United States and out, the failures of scientists to so far make carbon capture commercially viable have done little to stamp out interest.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says developing carbon capture will be essential to preventing the planet from warming more than 2 degrees Celsius — the point at which the consequences on sea level and weather are believed to be far more severe.

Earlier this year, the Republican-led Congress passed legislation almost doubling the tax credits for carbon capture, prompting major energy players like Shell and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to join with other firms in advocating for government policy supporting carbon capture.

Last year Congress ignored Trump's suggestions for draconian cuts for research into carbon capture, renewable energy and other technology. Most expect the same treatment for the Energy Department's proposal this year, Shah said.

"It's not your traditional red state, blue state divide," he said. "You have rock solid red Republicans behind (carbon capture) all the way, including people who work in oil and gas."

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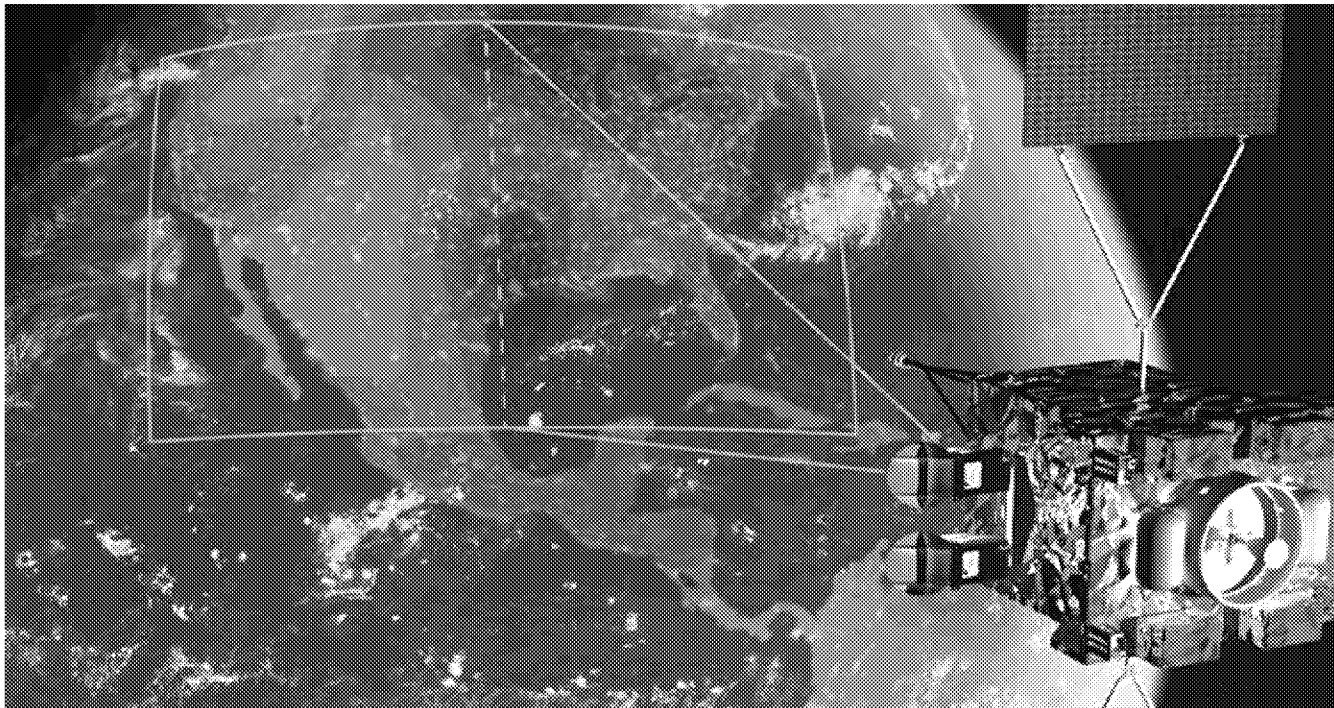
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SCIENCE

Meet Claire. She can see a little methane leak from space

John Fialka, E&E News reporter • Published: Friday, March 9, 2018



An artist's illustration of NASA's GeoCarb mission, which will map concentrations of greenhouse gases above the Americas. NASA/Lockheed Martin/University of Oklahoma

The world's first space-based system to help identify specific sources of greenhouse gas emissions is now circling the Earth.

The main unit in the network, an orbiter called the Tropospheric Monitoring Instrument (Tropomi), is a package of state-of-the-art sensors launched by the European Space Agency (ESA) in October. By December, it had begun to map the plumes of methane, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and various aerosols over industrial facilities and cities as it passed over Europe, Asia, Africa and South America.

Built to eventually map emissions planetwide every 24 hours and to show pollutants in higher resolution than ever before, Tropomi's sharper images drew raves from its sponsors. Josef Aschbacher, director of ESA's Earth observation programs, called it a "milestone for Europe" and noted that it will be "valuable for helping to put appropriate mitigation policies in place."

It may also prove to be a high-water mark for North America. Tropomi has been exchanging information with the owners of a second satellite, called Claire. It was launched in 2016 by GHGSat Inc., a Montreal-based company, to find leaking gases at sites like wellheads. Stephane Germain, the CEO, says that Claire's sensors are miniaturized to fit into a package the size of a microwave oven. The orbiter, a silver rectangular box, has been using Tropomi's information to home in on industrial facilities, such as oil and gas operations, to see if they have sprung methane leaks.

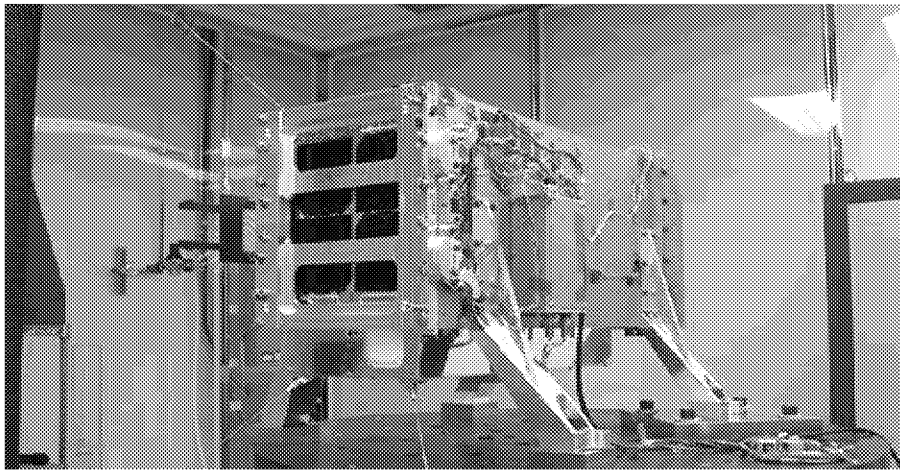
Tropomi can get its resolution down to about a square mile on Earth — a area that lets it see the emissions from a specific city. Germain saw a business opportunity there for Claire — named after a newborn child of one of his company's engineers. Working with the Canadian Space Agency, GHGSat spent three years designing a satellite whose lightweight imaging spectrometer can focus on an area as small as 164 square feet. That should allow Claire to pinpoint the exact source of the leaking methane so the company can fix it.

Under a cap-and-trade system to reduce emissions, like the one in California and Quebec, the cost of methane leaks can add up. Refineries, pipelines and remote fields of oil and gas wellheads can be hard to monitor, but an orbiting satellite traveling over 4 miles per second can measure a facility's emissions more cheaply, more accurately and more often.

By now, GHGSat says it has measured emissions from over 2,000 sites across the world.

"Primarily we want to serve industrial operations," Germain explained in an interview, but his company is also interested in comparing measurement techniques with government regulators. He hopes one day the same emissions data will be available to everybody to inform policymaking.

Spring a leak, and bells ring



The satellite named Claire undergoing testing before its 2016 launch. GHGSat Inc.

Ultimately, big industrial emitters will need "tiered systems" of sensors, Germain thinks. His company is preparing to launch two more satellites and is developing sensor packages that can be carried by aircraft, along with ground-based emissions sensors to monitor large industrial complexes.

Those efforts have attracted a potential U.S. competitor, Bluefield Technologies of Palo Alto, Calif. Its CEO, Yotam Ariel, has formed a team of scientists and engineers who are designing a satellite the size of a backpack to spot the distinctive patterns of sunlight that is reflected from small emissions of methane on Earth. Bluefield is one of many new companies taking advantage of new "CubeSats," or tiny satellites that can make inexpensive measurements from space (*Climatewire*, Jan. 29).

Bluefield is building its own list of clients and hopes to launch two satellites over the next two years. They will be miniaturized versions of what NASA has used for over 30 years. "It is not in space yet, but we have no doubts that the physics works," said Ariel.

Ultimately, Ariel predicts that the government will outsource satellite monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions to private companies. "We're providing a cost-effective way to do this globally and to have less of a debate on the data," he said. He expects it will take five to seven years for a private satellite industry to fully form, but it would save businesses money.

He hopes to sell satellite data to investors in oil and gas companies, such as hedge funds, and to government agencies, environmental groups and insurance companies that might want to monitor a company's progress in reducing emissions.

Ariel thinks landfills, cattle feeding operations, power plants and other producers of methane could be clients, too. "They [the client companies] have a new way to keep an eye on their infrastructure," he said. If there is a problem, such as a methane leak, "it rings a bell and they can send someone out to fix that."

Reduce and verify

There may be a lot of bells ringing. The system now is a haphazard, on-the-ground monitoring network used to track greenhouse gases. In some parts of the world, it may be politically impossible. Yet the stakes are growing. In November, the World Bank announced that the value of global carbon pricing initiatives, such as California's cap-and-trade system, is now \$52 billion and growing by 7 percent each year.

This year, China may unveil its own emissions trading system, which could be the largest carbon pricing initiative in the world. But how it may develop and how it might be verified remain to be seen. Under California's carbon system, a company is assigned a "cap" or a limit to its greenhouse gas emissions. Each metric ton of carbon must be covered by a permit. If a company reduces its emissions below the cap, it can sell excess permits for a profit. If it can't or if it experiences, for example, long-term methane leaks, it may have to buy more permits and pay whatever price the market demands.

"The days are coming when we will have satellites in the sky that can monitor any facility on this planet," said Rob Jackson, who heads Stanford University's Earth system science department. "I'm quite excited about that. The environmental community will be able to watchdog any facility on Earth. I think everyone will benefit."

Eric Kort, an atmospheric scientist at the University of Michigan, said that "the scientific community is quite excited that the Tropomi information will be useful," but he added that GHGSat has not released enough public information to convince him that Claire, its smaller, more precisely focused satellite, works.

"I hope that they get there, because I think it will be interesting. Tropomi has opened a new kind of window on the world," Kort said. He noted that in January, NASA announced that it hopes to enlarge its data gathering on Earth's emissions in the early 2020s, by launching a satellite it calls the Geostationary Carbon Observatory, or "GeoCarb."

GeoCarb will be placed in a geostationary orbit that will allow it to travel at the same speed as the Earth's rotation, giving it what NASA calls "wall to wall" focus on North and South America. That would allow it to make as many as 10 million daily observations. It will be the first U.S. satellite to measure methane plumes near Earth's surface.

"Methane leakage from natural gas production costs U.S. industry \$5 billion to \$10 billion a year," NASA noted, not quantifying the additional costs of artificially heating up the Earth's atmosphere. According to the space agency, methane emissions are increasing annually. Most of it comes from fossil fuel production. A smaller increase comes from agricultural production, like rice farming. The third source — forest fires — has recently been decreasing, according to a new NASA study.

Steven Hamburg, chief scientist for the Environmental Defense Fund, has spent years trying to find ways to quantify and reduce man-made methane emissions. He agrees that we're rapidly moving into a new, more robust world of verifying emissions. Traditionally, the United States and other countries have used satellites to measure emissions in a general way, to be used in global climate models.

With Tropomi, which was primarily developed by the Netherlands Institute for Space Research, Hamburg sees a new effort to map problematic emissions on Earth. That could help policymakers develop mitigation policies.

Business-driven ventures like GHGSat's Claire satellite can give companies an accurate picture of their emissions — while also verifying their reductions. "We need both, and we're seeing an emergence of technologies to do that, but we shouldn't conflate them," Hamburg said. "Together, they create the revolution."

For him, the revolution will produce a new data set that's seen and measured by multiple sources. It has to be trustworthy.

Hamburg sometimes imagines a new role for himself when and if the revolutionary moment arrives. "I'd like to walk up and say, 'Well, that's exciting, and now I'd like to see your data.'"

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Non-profit hopes to open outdoor classroom in swamps by Spanish Lake

BY STEVE HARDY | SHARDY@THEADVOCATE.COM MAR 8, 2018 - 2:28 PM



Advocate file photo by BILL FEIG. -- Older cypress trees reflected in the water in Spanish Lake Basin.

Steve Hardy

Just a few miles outside of St. Gabriel, scientists dream of having a classroom in the swamp.

A nonprofit intends to turn the wetlands around Spanish Lake into an educational destination. Students and scientists have thousands of marshy acres to explore, and because the site has been used as an oil field, there are already roads leading into the swamp.

"Plans to incorporate the wetland ecological education center into the public teaching curricula are already in process with the intent of some limited use as soon as practical," in both elementary in secondary education, Iberville parish authorities wrote in a news release.

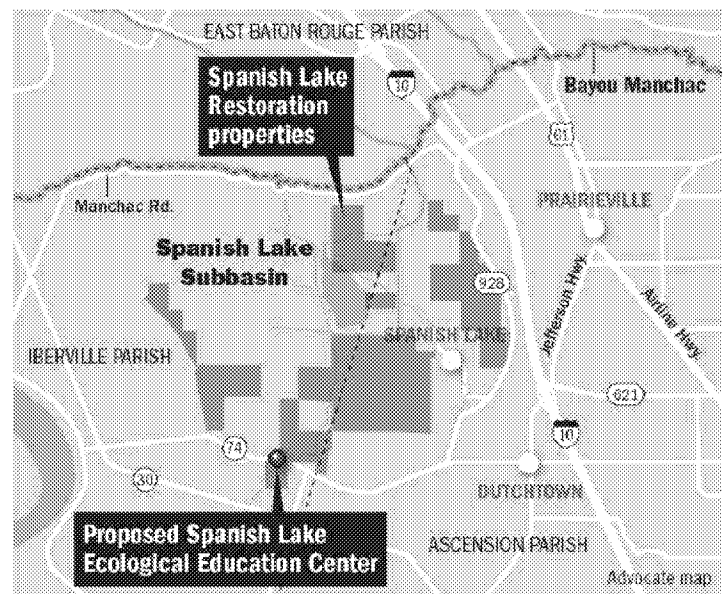
Story Continued Below



The Spanish Lake Restoration company owns 4,000 acres around the lake for wetlands mitigation. When a business damages or builds on top of swamps in Louisiana, regulators may require that it invest in a mitigation bank which refurbishes and preserves swamps like those around Spanish Lake.

There are restrictions on such land, but it can still be used for recreation, science and education, explained wetlands scientist Alissa Berthelot. She is the volunteer administrator of the nonprofit Spanish Lake Ecological Education Center, formed by the restoration company to develop programming for students.

Berthelot has a renovated trailer, some picnic tables and a parking lot on La. 74 just east of St. Gabriel that could get the ball rolling, though she still needs additional funds. With about \$50,000 Berthelot hopes to be able to cover insurance, hire someone to apply for grant money and keep the lights on so students could visit. She may need to find a few volunteers to lead children into the swamp, though.



"It's kind of in its infant stages," said John Clark, Iberville Parish's environmental and permits manager.



The nonprofit approached Iberville and St. Gabriel officials to let them know about their plan. The local governments haven't allocated any money for the outdoor classroom, but they're certainly talking it up. Authorities are excited by the prospect of an amenity that draws people to the St. Gabriel area and gives their own students a chance to explore the local wetlands, which can easily be incorporated into their curricula.

"It just seems like a perfect deal," Clark said.

Spanish Lake is an ideal location because it's so accessible, Berthelot said. The site, which also crosses into Ascension Parish, is close to Baton Rouge. And miles of existing roads built decades ago to reach oil wells now "can provide a unique opportunity for students to readily access and explore the deep swamp," the parish added in a statement.

Eventually, the government and nonprofit hope operations can expand into more permanent buildings, possibly with lab facilities that could also benefit LSU students performing wetlands research in the area.

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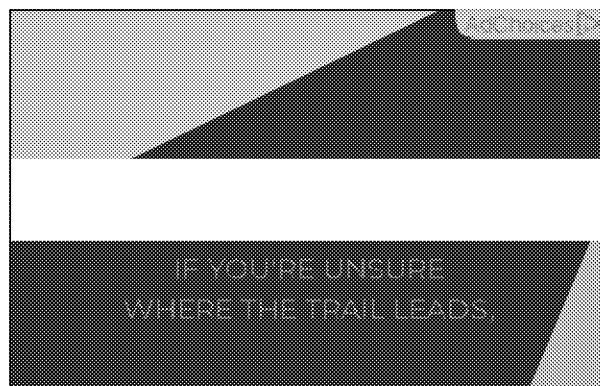


Ray Leszczynski, Communities

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ARLINGTON — As the public input period comes to a close for a proposed high-speed rail line from Dallas to Houston, North Texas transportation planners are unveiling potential stops for a connector route.



The Regional Transportation Commission on Thursday discussed progress for a connection to Fort Worth and ongoing discussion with other planners for a line south from Fort Worth to Waco, Temple-Killeen, Austin, San Antonio and Laredo.

The RTC will decide in April whether to take on the environmental study to get the Dallas-Fort Worth line in motion. Environmental clearance would be about two years away.

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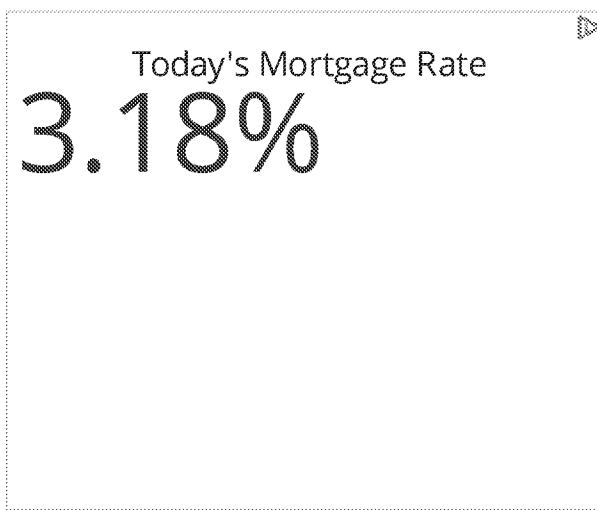
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A stop in Arlington remains a point of contention. Officials in Dallas, where a penny of sales tax goes to Dallas Area Rapid Transit, do not want Arlington — which is not a part of DART or the Fort Worth Transportation Authority — to get high-speed rail. Dallas City Council member Sandy Greyson reiterated that point at Thursday's RTC meeting in Arlington.

"It is the city of Dallas' position that no city be included unless they are member of a transit authority," Greyson said.

Arlington Mayor Jeff Williams responded to Greyson that "we certainly want to be regional players and very much want to be part of the regional transportation system."

Public input period ending



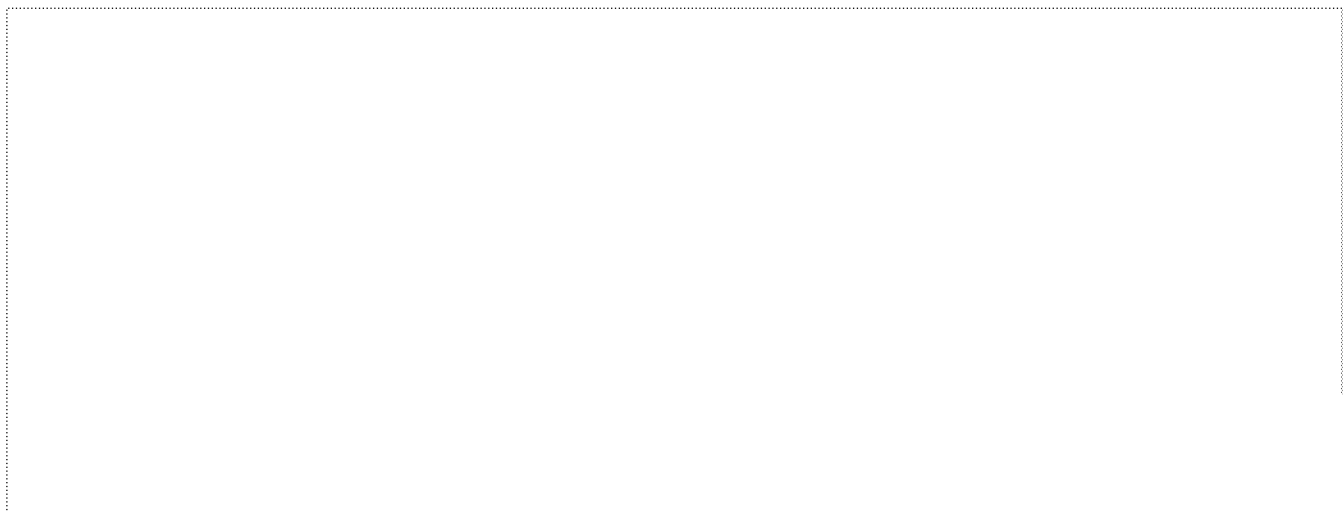
Texas Central picks downtown Dallas station site for its \$15 billion high-speed rail proposal

Though it already held public meetings in each of 10 counties affected by the rail line during the impact period, federal railroad authorities added a meeting last Monday in Houston after several requests. Texas Central officials said people in Houston wanted to talk about the location of the station. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement evaluated three Houston terminal station options, including Northwest Mall, which was eventually selected.

The Federal Railroad Administration will look into concerns from the public and include all the comments in a final environmental impact statement.

Photo Gallery

1/3



(Ashley Landis/Staff Photographer)



"We will be notified to incorporate solutions into the designs," said Holly Reed, managing director of external affairs for Texas Central Partners. "That gets put into the action plan for the project."

ADVERTISING

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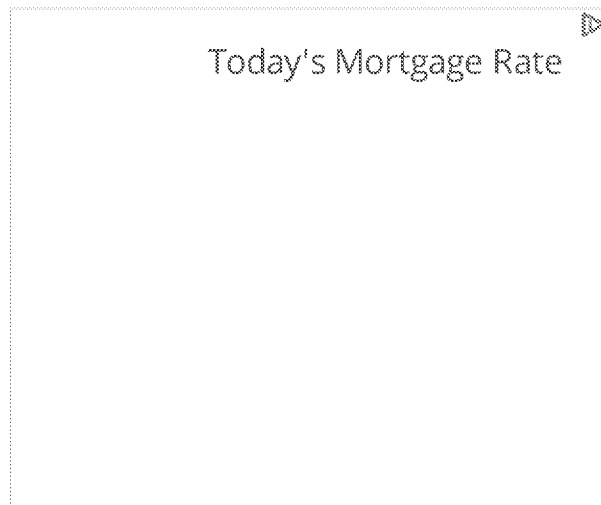
The company's plan for high-speed rail is not popular with many landowners and leaders in rural counties along the route. Sheriffs from the eight rural counties along the proposed route held a news conference last week to introduce their coalition and voice concerns about the bullet train, which would take passengers from Dallas to Houston in 90 minutes with a stop near College Station.

Sheriffs say high-speed rail developers excluded them from planning, but company officials say that's not true

'Frought with faults'

The sheriffs' event was supported by Texans Against High Speed Rail, which is also ramping up its opposition.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement "in and of itself is really a disaster argument, fraught with faults," said Kyle Workman, president of Texans Against High Speed Rail. "It's based on a fundamental they can realign or close roads. Or the assumption they can charge tax on ticket sales. Transportation is not charged sales tax.



"If you're Texas Central and assume you can reroute 15 roads in a county, what happens if that county says you can't do that. And every county is doing that from Ellis to Waller," Workman added. "Look at the major issues that are already there and you can only imagine the depth at which the minor issues go. They are so far from being able get this done, it's not even funny."

Texas Central Partners says the public input process, which began Dec. 22, is designed to address concerns from county leaders, the Texas Department of Transportation and individuals. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement assures that no public roads will be closed, the company said.

"It is a 240-mile project that touches a lot of people's property," Reed said. "That's very important, to take those concerns into the process."



Holly Reed of Texas Central Partners, developers hoping to build and operate a high-speed train between Dallas and Houston (Texas Central Partners)

Texans Against High Speed Rail also believes Texas Central needs legislative approval before it can operate as a railroad. The company disagrees.

"The pace is set by the FRA, the environmental statement and a safety permit," Reed said. "We hope that's final by year end, which starts construction next year. The Legislature does not have
